

By the time you read this you will be only a few short days away from casting your vote for the school budget and bond. I will summarize the key points for you in an effort to frame the issues and provide you with facts and figures as well as the impact of your vote on the children, staff, and citizen's of the ConVal School District.

The Budget:

Difficult times are being realized by all of us on a daily basis. Running the School District is no exception. Rising fixed costs, which are either contractually obligated, i.e. transportation and other contracted services, or mandated, i.e. in district or out of district placement of students with special educational needs, are rising. Revenues from the Federal and State Government continue to decrease. Moving our District forward academically requires investments in Instructional resources, i.e. new programs, equipments and professional development for our staff. These opposing forces are all in play as we present our final proposed operating budget for 2010-2011. We have been firmly committed to being educationally, fiscally, and socially responsible as we went through our budget process.

Once our decision was made to support the path improvement model, we scrutinized the budget trying to realize savings and create efficiencies where ever possible. In the end, we slashed almost \$600,000 from the initial proposed budget. You asked that we keep any increase under 2.0% and we did. Our proposed gross budget for the FY 2010-2011 is \$43,698,819, which represents an increase of 1.57% over last year's budget. The operating budget, which determines the tax rate, is \$41,149,986, a 1.2% increase over last year. The 2010-11 default budget is \$43,543,965, or \$154,854 less than the proposed budget. The impact on your taxes, based on assumptions regarding valuations and the tax rate would be approximately \$70 per year for a home valued at \$300,000. That would mean an additional \$5.8 per month you would need to put aside in return for supporting the students of the ConVal District as we continue to make necessary adjustments and improvements in the educational programs, upgrade our infrastructure and execute our strategic plan to make ConVal one of the top 5 school districts in the State by 2013.

The Bond:

This year we are proposing a \$4.9M bond (to be paid back over 5 years) which will address the need to make some major renovations to ConVal High School that were identified in the accreditation report conducted by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEAS&C) in 2005. Issues that must be addressed and come into compliance with are ADA accessibility, adequate air quality, life safety issues and compliance with Title IX. Failure to address the areas in need of improvement from the NEAS&C report can result in the High School losing accreditation. What that means to our students is that if two students are competing with one another for placement in a college or university, and one student comes from a high school that is not accredited, that student is likely to lose out.

The proposed bond will fund year one of a five year plan for facility upgrades, as expressed in our Strategic Plan (details are available on our website). Reaching a \$5M cap ensures that the project is eligible for Building Aid from the State of New Hampshire.

Since we will be retiring some of our debt in the next few years, the Board feels that now is the time to bond this project. The overall cost of the Bond is low, \$441K over 5 years. This is less than .2% of the combined budgets for the NEXT FIVE YEARS!

Our High school is a community resource, used not only by students, but also by the public at large. Access issues affect all citizens.

Using the same formula for the budget, the impact of passing this bond on your tax bill using a home valued at \$300,000, would be approximately \$70.00 per year. Once again this would mean putting aside \$5.8 a month. In return we would be able to ensure that our High School does not lose accreditation, and thus our students will be competitive when they apply to colleges and universities. We also will be able to provide access to the school for all citizens regardless of the ability to use stairs, and navigate hallways and doorways.

In the end, your vote to support the budget and the bond, by voting YES, would mean having to save, approximately \$11.60 on a monthly basis. This would be the cost of two large pizzas, or two value-meals at your favorite fast food restaurant, or two movie tickets, or 4 gallons of gas. I realize that this may present hardships for some of you and I understand that any increase is difficult, but I would ask that you consider the actual affect on your financial situation and balance that with the needs of our students, staff, and all citizen's who use our High School, and then please vote YES on Tuesday march 9th.

I want to close by thanking all of you who have written, called, or just stopped by in the street to share your thoughts, opinions, concerns, and frustrations. It is valued and appreciated by me.

Feel free to send me E-mail, at sbrock@conval.edu, or call me at 547-6221 or send you comments directly to my home at 700 Bible Hill Rd.